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# Introduction

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Leading colleges and universities has never been easy. But increasingly pressures related to finance and personnel challenge even the most successful of institutions. And many times these pressures are linked.

How do colleges cultivate the next generation of talent? How do financial experts work with academic leaders? How do colleges handle pricing in an era of constant competition and scrutiny? How do college leaders function in politicized governance structures?

The articles in this compilation explore how some institutions – with varying degrees of success – are responding to these challenges. *Inside Higher Ed* will continue to cover these issues. We welcome your comments on this booklet and your ideas for future coverage.

--The Editors

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## Pumping Out Presidents

Three former Tufts leaders became college presidents on the same day, so what's the secret sauce?

By Rick Seltzer // July 26, 2018



The new presidents of Harvard, Union and Hampshire (and Tufts campus)

July 1 was a very good day for former Tufts University administrators climbing the leadership ladder.

Three people who formerly held high-ranking spots at [Tufts](#) started as college presidents elsewhere on the first day of this month. [Headlining the group](#) is new [Harvard University](#) president Lawrence S. Bacow, who was Tufts president from 2001 to 2011. David Harris left his job as Tufts provost and senior vice president, which he had held since 2012, [to start](#) as president at Union College, in New York. And Miriam E. Nelson, a longtime Tufts faculty member whose roles included being associate dean and chair of the faculty at its college of civic life from 2014 to 2016, [became president](#) at [Hampshire College](#) (she had most recently been director of the Sustainability Institute at the University of New Hampshire).

While new presidents often take over on July 1, the day most institutions' fiscal years begin, three presidents who share a background at a single institution and start on the same day is an intriguing quirk.

It comes at a time when Tufts can point to several other leaders in its presidential tree.

Jamshed Bharucha, a former Tufts provost and senior vice president who was president of the Cooper Union from 2011 to 2015, [was recently announced](#) as founding vice chancellor of a new institution in India, SRM University-Amaravati, meaning he will lead the new research university. The university's former arts and sciences dean, Joanne Berger-Sweeney, is president of [Trinity College](#).

That makes Tufts, a Boston-area university with a combined undergraduate and graduate enrollment of just 11,500, an interesting example of a recurring phenomenon in higher education: certain colleges and universities tend to turn up frequently on college presidents' résumés.

"You do see hot spots," said Jan Greenwood, partner and president of the search firm Greenwood/Asher & Associates. "If you know the market and have tracked it and watch how people make moves,

you know in fact that some of that does go on."

Such hot spots can be long-lasting or develop for limited periods of time, Greenwood said. She thinks they don't develop quite as often as it might seem to the outside observer, but certain institutions tend to share talent frequently.

"There was a period where the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, University of Texas at Austin and the University of California system were kind of tracking one with the other," Greenwood said. "That said to a search consultant, if you're doing a search at UIUC, for example, be sure you don't ignore Texas at Austin or the UC system."

What characteristics make an institution more likely to be a source of future presidents? Complexity, for one thing, search experts say. An administrator who fared well managing part of a complex university with multiple colleges -- and often a medical school -- arguably demonstrated the ability to handle the slew of issues he or she will face as president.

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Geography can matter, too. Institutions in the college-dense Northeast tend to get more visibility than those in more sparsely populated areas.

Then there's some chicken-and-egg thinking. Institutions that have produced successful presidents in the past are often expected to produce successful presidents in the future.

Past studies have noted the phenomenon as well. A 2017 [report](#) from Deloitte and the Center for 21st Century Universities at Georgia Tech studied over 800 sitting presidents' CVs and identified a group of institutions it dubbed presidential "talent factories" because several presidents had held positions there as faculty members, deans, provosts or other senior staff members.

The list, unsurprisingly, was heavily tilted toward the Ivy League and other top research universities, but a few unexpected institutions broke in as well: the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; Indiana University, Bloomington; the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; Cornell University; Dartmouth College; Brown University; Harvard University; Yale University; Princeton University; the University of Pennsylvania; Johns Hopkins University; Georgia State University; Texas A&M University, College Station; Arizona State University, Tempe; the University of California, Berkeley.

Of course, large institutions also tend to employ more administrators than small ones, making it more likely they'll produce future presidents. Yet search consultants say they often find good candidates elsewhere.

"Maybe I'm prejudiced because I come out of this world, but it's the small undergraduate liberal arts col-

leges," said Katherine Haley, founder of a higher education executive search and consulting firm, Haley Associates. "Candidates, when I speak with them, talk about that experience in a way that changed them forever. I think it's the sense of studying across a lot of disciplines and focusing on a lot of ideas."

Haley is a former president of Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania and Whittier College in California. She's also been the chair of the board of the Annapolis Group, the organization of the country's top liberal arts colleges. She has Tufts ties as well -- she received her bachelor's degree from the university, plus an honorary doctorate awarded when Bacow was president.

An institution like Tufts is a good balance between a research institution and a residential undergraduate experience for aspiring presidents, Haley said. Tufts boasts an unusual breadth of programs and graduate schools for an institution of 11,500 students, including graduate schools for engineering, dentistry, veterinary medicine, biomedical sciences and medicine. A location in the Boston area doesn't hurt when it comes to administrators being noticed.

"It's thick with higher education,

and I think that creates a certain kind of hotbed," Haley said. "You have a sense of all of these different organizations and how they work and how they approach things and the variety of approaches they take."

It can be hard to determine from the outside whether an institution is well run, but having other institutions in an area to hold up for comparison can help. Another factor that can be difficult to define is whether an institution takes leadership development seriously and whether its top brass encourages lower-level administrators to move on to bigger and better things.

Tufts tries to foster leadership internally and externally, said its president, Anthony P. Monaco. It runs programs for new chairs, deans and directors to help them get up to speed in their positions and learn how to manage people. It also budgets for administrators to take part in external leadership development programs.

The university tries to be open about budgets and whether any schools are encountering difficulties. It works to keep its leaders from falling into silos.

"We also try to foster a relationship between, let's say, the deans



My postdocs, the best thing I could do for them was get them good academic jobs. Holding on to them for longer than they needed, just out of selfish motives, I think that's not a great sign of leadership. So I think it's a culture here.



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of the schools," Monaco said. "They know that's an expectation of them when they're here, that they would not only be looking after their school. I think that offers experiences and knowledge, which probably plays well in interviews and job opportunities, because you have a breadth of experience."

Monaco believes most leaders feel comfortable talking with him about their career goals and opportunities. The university tries to help leaders gain experience that will help them. If, say, a dean in a professional school is considering jobs that require working with undergraduates, Tufts might arrange for the dean to be on a committee dealing with undergraduate issues.

While Monaco would like to keep top talent within the university, he is of the opinion that holding people back is of no benefit.

"I had that attitude when I was leading, even, scientific research,"

said Monaco, a geneticist. "My postdocs, the best thing I could do for them was get them good academic jobs. Holding on to them for longer than they needed, just out of selfish motives, I think that's not a great sign of leadership. So I think it's a culture here."

Trustees have to support that culture as well, Monaco said.

Of course, it can come with downsides.

One drawback is the potential for a large number of simultaneous administrative openings from time to time. It can feel like "search overload," Monaco said. But open lines of communication can help the institution learn about likely departures in advance. Some turnover also allows for new voices to be promoted and new talent to be hired from outside.

"You don't want to promote everyone from within, because it can get insular," Monaco said. "People

have different experiences, different ways of doing things, and that's the healthy part of bringing talent in from outside."

Those who have been involved in hiring Tufts administrators say it has been strengthened by successive generations of presidents with a clear vision. John Isaacson is the founder of the search firm Isaacson, Miller. He recruited both Bacow and Monaco, and the firm has been involved in searches hiring numerous administrators with Tufts ties, including Harris and Nelson.

Monaco has continued to build Tufts after Bacow elevated the institution's profile, Isaacson said. Bacow had been chancellor at MIT before coming to Tufts.

"They were always a good place, but he made them a hot school," Isaacson said of Bacow. "When recruiting for presidents, you want to recruit from some place that has shown ambition and success." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/07/26/tufts-university-builds-track-record-administrators-becoming-college-presidents>

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## 'This Isn't Just a Financial Problem'

CFOs need board and presidential support to put turnaround plans in place, presenters at the annual business officers' meeting say.

By Rick Seltzer // July 25, 2018



SOURCE:  
ISTOCK / KANIZPHOTO

LONG BEACH, Calif. -- It's not particularly hard to find a chief financial officer who can tell a story about being hired, running the numbers and then watching the chair of the board's jaw drop when he or she learns for the first time how far the institution is in debt.

What is harder is finding someone offering firm recommendations on the role CFOs should play in delivering the bad news, making sure administrators, faculty members and other leaders take it seriously, and then plotting a course to turn around a college.

But at least one session addressed the issue Monday at the National Association of College and University Business Officers' annual meeting.

In short, if a college or university really wants to change its ways and find stronger financial footing, the CFO can't be sequestered in his or her office, filling out spreadsheets and running projections. He or she needs to be engaged with the institution's various constituencies -- and backed up by the

college's president and its board.

"This isn't just a financial problem for the CFO to solve," said Nick Wallace, director at BKD CPAs & Advisors and a trustee at [Taylor University](#), in Indiana. "It's not just your problem. It's a problem that the whole institution has to solve together."

That may sound like a truism in the world of higher education, where shared governance means multiple parties are supposed to have a say in any major university decisions. Yet in many situations where colleges have failed, it's been clear the lines of communication broke down somewhere between the senior financial officer, the rest of the administration and the campus at large.

Think of Saint Joseph's College, in Indiana, which [last year](#) surprised many of its students, faculty members and alumni when it [announced](#) it had to suspend operations because of a financial crisis. Or Mount Ida College, in Massachusetts, which broke off merger talks with one college

and then weeks later announced it was closing and selling its campus -- a plan B that few knew existed coming at a time when most were unaware the budget had reached a breaking point.

The CFO, president, provost and other cabinet members have to be in agreement about financial conditions and discuss those conditions with the board, Wallace said. Then the board has to agree as well.

"That is an issue at times," Wallace said. "Does the president really believe you have a problem, and do they have faith in this plan to turn things around? Getting a president to that point is sometimes a very difficult thing to do."

Identifying the characteristics of stress can help. Wallace listed 14 characteristics of financial and operational stress, like running deficits in three of the past five years, new student enrollment dropping by more than 10 percent, more than one cycle of midyear budget cuts, freshman tuition discount rates of more than 50 percent and



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declining cash reserves. He also listed signs of academic and leadership stress, like no new degree programs developed for at least two years, an institution on probation or warning with its accreditor, and a faculty with an average age of 58 or older.

"Being in a turnaround situation is a little bit like starting a 12-step program, because you have to recognize that there is a problem," Wallace said. "That's not the easiest thing to do."

The question of turning around a college isn't far-fetched in today's environment, of course. [In a recent Inside Higher Ed survey](#), only 44 percent of chief business officers at four-year baccalaureate colleges said they were confident their colleges would be financially stable over the next 10 years, meaning confidence is [down](#) substantially from previous years. That same group of business officers was likely heavily represented in Monday's session, if a show of hands is to be believed. Most attendees in the room raised their hands when asked if they were at small to midsize institutions.

This year's NACUBO annual meeting slate was full of information about financial forecasting and modeling. A question that always follows is how the CFO can go from cooking up the forecasts to helping a college actually put changes in place.

For on-the-ground experience, Brandon Parker, the CFO of one college consulting with BKD, shared his experience. Parker is the CFO at Pacific Union College, a Seventh-day Adventist institu-

tion in the Napa Valley that enrolls about 1,200 students.

Enrollment has dropped by about one-third in three years, Parker said. The college was facing annual deficits of \$5 million or more if it didn't make a changes. It's facing pressure from a declining number of graduates from the Adventist high schools it traditionally drew upon.

So it put in place a turnaround plan that included reductions in the number of full-time employees, operational improvements and some creative, if often incremental, new revenue sources.

Among the changes, it cut about 46 full-time-equivalent positions from its 2017-18 budget through retirements, attrition and involuntary separations to save close to \$3 million. It made changes to its health-care benefits for employees, outsourced security and some property management, and decided to pursue a business running a commercial storage park. Storage is in heavy demand in the area, start-up costs are low, and the college thinks it can earn about \$70,000 per year on the business before taxes.

Some of those moves might not fix the financial picture for the long term, but they can help bridge the gap.

"You've got to think outside the box," Parker said. "Finance, let's be honest, sometimes moves faster than enrollment. What can we do in finance to make a difference as quickly as possible?"

The college also made decisions related to its long-term outlook, deciding not to sell parcels of valu-

able land. Leaders [said](#) the land was the college's endowment, and Parker indicated it can be utilized and monetized without selling it.

Pacific Union's leadership wants its CFO to give presentations to groups like the faculty about the financial situation. So he's sometimes been the face of bad news.

"You can't constantly be feeding people bad news or else you're going to kill morale," Parker said. "So how do you juggle, 'This is ... the reason for the turnaround plan' with, 'OK, guys, here are the good things that are happening?'"

Giving the right information to the right groups is key, Parker added. So is providing enough context.

That was another point echoed by *Inside Higher Ed's* survey of business officers. Business officers who were not confident in their institution's future financial stability were less likely to say constituencies like students, faculty, staff and alumni were well informed about the situation. While 94 percent of business officers who were confident in their campus's 10-year outlook said constituents were given "accurate and sufficient" information, only 77 percent who were not confident said the same.

Parker recognizes that some believe he is moving too quickly at Pacific Union. Although some have been devastated by the changes, others are excited, he said.

"Some people have self-selected out and are not going to be coming back for this next school year because they just can't handle the change anymore," Parker said. "Some are really energized by it." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/07/25/cfos-are-key-college-turnaround-plans-they-cant-do-it-alone>

## Bucking the 'Prestige Pricing' Trend

St. John's College plans to reduce tuition and use donations to make up for lost revenue under a new funding model designed to make the college more affordable and accessible.

By Marjorie Valburn // September 13, 2018



St. John's College Annapolis campus

When St. John's College became the latest higher ed institution to announce a tuition reset this week, it may have seemed to be simply joining the fray of private liberal arts colleges ostensibly reducing the costs of attendance.

Rather than joining the [trend that some critics dismiss as a misleading pricing gimmick](#), however, St. John's administrators insisted they were bucking the trend by making the college more affordable and accessible -- not in theory, but in actual practice.

They say the price cut to \$35,000 from \$52,000 will result in a hefty loss of revenue that the college -- which has campuses in Santa Fe, N.M., and Annapolis, Md. -- plans to make up with a \$300 million fund-raising campaign. Unlike many colleges that have reset their tuition, significant numbers of St. John's students will actually see a meaningful reduction in what they pay, with donations designed to fill

the resulting gap in revenue.

"Yes, there will be a loss in revenue from student-derived revenue," said Mark Roosevelt, college-wide president of St. John's College and president of the Santa Fe campus. He added that the college received approximately 70 percent of its budget from student-derived revenue in the past but by 2017 the percentage had fallen to less than 40 percent from student-derived revenue.

"We believe the days when students and families could pay exorbitant tuition prices are gone and they aren't coming back--nor should they--and we are placing philanthropy at the center of our financial model rather than student-derived revenue to ensure we remain strong financially as a college," he said.

Roosevelt said they are moving the college away from a so-called "prestige pricing and a tuition-centered model" and adopting a new "philanthropy-centered model" that will reduce annual tuition for under-

graduate students beginning in the 2019-20 academic year. College officials say the true cost of providing a St. John's education would require a \$60,000 tuition.

"This got to a tipping point," said Roosevelt. "Private colleges have increased their tuition 157 percent in the past two decades, which is three times the rate of inflation. So you think are we going to go to \$60,000, then \$70,000, then \$80,000? It just didn't feel right for it to keep growing. You've got to find balance. I don't know if we found it but it just felt right. We still recognize that \$35,000 is still a lot of money and if that's too much for some families we have generous, need-based scholarships. But we hope that people see the space between \$35,000 and \$52,000 as a very big space."

He said even St. John's alumni think the college is expensive. A recent survey of alumni found that 73 percent said the college's tuition was "too high" and 77 percent said

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they could not afford to send their child there at the current price of \$52,000, he said.

Roosevelt also hopes the college sets an example for other institutions considering tuition resets by adding "a little oomph to the question of prestige pricing and creating a little more momentum for other colleges considering making changes."

He noted recent announcements of new pricing models by Wells College, in New York, and [Oglethorpe University, in Georgia](#).

"I think it's the beginning of some movement," he said.

[Some education pricing experts are skeptical of tuition resets](#) and say they generally don't work because most institutions use them to attract more students to raise the overall amount of tuition they collect, not to cut the net price of what students and their families typically pay after colleges lower the sticker price by offering grants and schol-

arships. The impact of resets on actual tuition bills is blunted by corresponding reductions in financial aid offered by the colleges; few students are typically paying anywhere near the listed price.

At St. John's, 99 percent of the freshmen class are receiving either merit scholarships or need-based financial aid from the college, according to data provided by the college. Seventy-seven percent of them are receiving need-based financial aid from the college. In all, the 2018 freshman class received \$8,058,553 in scholarships and 89 percent of it was need-based aid. What's more, 69 percent of incoming freshman in the 2018-2019 academic year received a tuition discount and 24 percent of incoming freshman were recipients of Pell Grants, a need-based subsidy provided by the federal government.

The new funding model being used by St. John's, the third oldest college in the country and a

unique and prestigious institution with small classes, no-frills campuses, and a curriculum focused exclusively on the so-called "Great Books," is different. Administrators say it places "extended philanthropy at the center of the model."

St. John's capital campaign, which has already raised \$183 million in commitments, is expected to double the college's endowment by 2023 and help it better meet the needs of future students, according to the announcement.

Bill Hall, founder and president of Applied Policy Research Inc., an enrollment and pricing advising firm, said he was impressed by St. John's decision.

"The important thing here is the outright price cut," he said. "If you don't make the explicit assumption that you're going to other sources than tuition, I don't think you're being realistic. It's a solid commitment that is going to shift the responsibility from families to the donors." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/10/23/several-programs-are-encouraging-students-slow-down-and-think-about-life-outside>

# Is There a Right to Know a College Might Close?

After Mount Ida College closure, Massachusetts proposals grapple with whether colleges should disclose shutdown possibilities and when regulators should step in.

By Rick Seltzer // July 16, 2018



SOURCE:  
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Months after Mount Ida College's sudden collapse rocked higher education-heavy Massachusetts, several arms of the state's government are exploring regulatory changes to try to minimize future damage from colleges that run out of money.

Proposals vary, but the state's governor, lawmakers and Department of Higher Education are all entertaining the idea of making colleges disclose financial troubles to regulators or students at an earlier date.

Also being debated is how to make sure closing colleges shut down in an orderly fashion, drawing up "living wills" or teach-out plans that would ensure their students have a place to finish their education after a campus closes its doors. The responsibilities of regulators, accreditors and boards of trustees are all under scrutiny as well.

While momentum is strong, it's still not clear whether any proposal

-- disclosure focused or otherwise -- will be put in place in a state that is home to a disproportionately large number of private colleges. Private college advocates object to strict new regulatory requirements, arguing that even after closures such as Mount Ida this year and Marian Court College in [2015](#), unexpected college closures are too rare to merit a crackdown. Some colleges have rebounded from financial struggles or found orderly ways to wind down, such as when Andover Newton Theological Seminary finalized plans to merge into [Yale](#) Divinity School [in 2017](#).

Despite the uncertain prospects, the prominent place Massachusetts occupies in private higher education means even talk about stricter regulations are being closely watched elsewhere. As anxieties mount across the country about small private colleges' viability, the notable state's decisions could very well be-

come a template for others, if [fears about a wave](#) of college closures spread.

For that to happen, Massachusetts leaders would have to settle on answers within a frustrating circle of questions. Just how likely are future college closures in a world of shifting student demographics, swiftly climbing tuition discount rates and rising public skepticism about the value of a college degree? What measures are strong enough to protect students? And what, if any, requirements can be put in place without harming the very institutions that are already on the ropes?

"Fundamentally, your first responsibility is to the consumers," said Richard M. Freeland, president emeritus of [Northeastern University](#), who served as the commissioner of higher education in Massachusetts from 2008 to 2015. "The danger, of course, that folks always worry about is getting an overly zealous



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regulator that pushes the button too soon and does real harm.”

### Cause and Effect

Mount Ida [sparked](#) an intense outcry when it [announced](#) in April that it would close at the end of the semester and sell its campus to the [University of Massachusetts at Amherst](#). Some backlash was directed at the public UMass Amherst, which drew criticism for snapping up a campus without showing much regard for Mount Ida students or other institutions in the UMass system. Much of the anger went toward Mount Ida, however.

Shortly before it closed, Mount Ida leaders [said](#) the private college was growing -- even after merger talks with nearby [Lasell College fell apart](#). After the closure was announced, students and faculty scrambled to try to figure out what they would do in the rapidly approaching fall semester, and many students said they were left with no clear teach-out plans for their programs. Some had just put down deposits to enroll as new students at Mount Ida, turning down options to enroll elsewhere.

Mount Ida has been criticized for not following existing procedures for college closure. State law [currently requires](#) closing institutions to tell the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education as early as possible. Closing colleges are also supposed to organize transfer opportunities for students. But the department's commissioner [has said](#) he learned about Mount Ida's closure through the press.

Several branches of government are pursuing regulatory changes in the aftermath. Earlier this spring, Attorney General Maura Healey [called](#) for a new office of financial oversight within the state's Department of Higher Education that would



Fundamentally, your first responsibility is to the consumers. The danger, of course, that folks always worry about is getting an overly zealous regulator that pushes the button too soon and does real harm.



monitor colleges for signs of trouble and work with failing institutions to close in an orderly fashion. The Department of Higher Education has gone on to form a working group to look at ways to blunt the impact of sudden college closures.

Late in June, the Massachusetts Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight published a report on Mount Ida's acquisition by UMass Amherst, which [was sharply critical](#) of the series of events. The report also recommended several new regulatory requirements that would affect struggling private colleges.

Then last week, Governor Charlie Baker, a Republican, included language in [a supplemental budget](#) proposal that would require colleges and universities at risk of imminent closure to notify state regulators, prepare some contingency plans and tell applicants about risks to their short-term viability.

The language calls for the Board of Higher Education to establish regulations requiring that it be notified of “any known liabilities or risks which may result in imminent closure” and that an institution facing such risks should submit a contingency plan including “arrangements for the transfer and long-term maintenance of student records in the event that the institution ceases to exist.” It goes on to call for institu-

tions to notify accepted applicants if they have known short-term liabilities or risks jeopardizing their ability to fulfill “obligations to current and admitted students.” The state Board of Higher Education would have to draw up specific regulations regarding the notifications.

Baker's office said in a news release that the proposal would provide new consumer protections for college students. They would cover both public and private institutions.

The governor took a different tack than some ideas the Senate committee recommended in June.

The committee endorsed a proposal to require degree-granting institutions to tell the commonwealth's Board of Higher Education at least 120 days before they plan to close, merge, acquire another institution or open a branch campus. The board would then review such plans to determine whether they are consistent with an institution's five-year master plan.

That proposal would also require degree-granting institutions to alert the Board of Higher Education within 14 days of learning they may not have the financial resources needed to maintain program quality, “support institutional improvements” or graduate an entering class. The board would be responsible for establishing guidelines for notifying

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students, employees and prospective students.

Separately, the Senate committee said institutions should be required to submit audited financial statements to the attorney general's office five months after the close of their fiscal years, instead of a current submission requirement of 11 months. It recommended colleges and universities voluntarily adopt a standard under which they would directly link from their websites to their audited financial statements so students, parents and faculty members could easily access the statements.

And the committee called for the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, NEASC, to have an "affirmative duty" to notify the Board of Higher Education when an accreditation assessment shows an institution to be in financial jeopardy. The department should determine the definition of financial jeopardy status and decide whether current and prospective students should be notified, the committee recommended.

"This notification would provide the Department of Higher Education with valuable time to engage with schools on potentially needed closure plans," the committee [said in a report](#).

Demographic challenges facing private colleges demand a state with stronger transparency and communication requirements, said the Democratic state senator who chairs the committee, Kathleen O'Connor Ives. Such requirements could allow regulators to work with institutions to prevent closure or to help them find a merger or acquisition plan that would be well thought out for students, staff and faculty, she said.

"Massachusetts, and most likely

other states, need more specificity in terms of how these situations play out," O'Connor Ives said, adding that changes would protect the public interest and a state economy that is heavily tilted toward higher education.

"We can take these basic steps," O'Connor Ives said. "The culture across the schools should be that those financials are just available on the schools' website, because that's how a prospective student is going to find out. That's how a parent is going to find out. And why wouldn't that be part of the healthy competition?"

It is unfair for colleges to position themselves as the gateway to a successful career, take students' money, but then provide no information to those students, O'Connor Ives said. She doesn't think it's acceptable to assume boards of trustees will figure out the situation after the Mount Ida case.

"The stakes are so high," O'Connor Ives said. "It's so arrogant to say, 'Trust us,' when, honestly, we did. And then you left them in the lurch anyway."

### Private Colleges Push Back

The rhetoric worries small-college advocates -- and not just those in Massachusetts. They argue small-college closures are rare.

"This is a real misdiagnosis of

the situation in a state where private higher education is a pretty important industry," said Richard Ekman, president of the Council of Independent Colleges, a national association of private, nonprofit colleges that used to count Mount Ida among its members.

If the state is going to step in, it needs to do so in a helpful way, Ekman said. He suggests per-student subsidies for private colleges. Massachusetts currently subsidizes public colleges, and providing some money per student to private institutions -- even at lower rates than state institutions receive -- could support an important industry, keep students closer to home and save money in the end, Ekman said.

Massachusetts already spends millions of dollars annually on financial aid for students to attend private colleges, which has [prompted debate](#) in the past. The state has also [drawn criticism](#) for what some believe is a low level of funding for public colleges.

But the state could do more for private institutions, Ekman said.

"This is not the fault of Mount Ida or Lasell," he said. "This is a missed opportunity by the state of Massachusetts to do something that would be helpful, and instead they are trying to shift the blame to the private institutions."



The culture across the schools should be that those financials are just available on the schools' website, because that's how a prospective student is going to find out. That's how a parent is going to find out. And why wouldn't that be part of the healthy competition?





## Is There a Right to Know a College Might Close?

Ekman offered specific criticisms of some of the Massachusetts regulatory proposals. Audits aren't done quickly enough to file them on the timeline the State Senate committee suggested, he said. Additional reporting could also cause problems for colleges showing signs of nonfatal weakness.

Forcing data to be disclosed without enough contextual information to allow students to interpret that data would be problematic, the argument goes. Ekman said strong completion rates and graduation rates at private colleges are also important for students to know.

"You wouldn't want the disclosure of information about some financial weakness to be exploited in some way," Ekman said. "The remedy is not to ask a college that's in trouble to go advertising their troubles."

A case can certainly be made that government entities have no business mandating potentially harmful disclosures by private colleges. On the other hand, an opposing case can be argued that colleges receive significant public subsidies through federal financial aid programs and tax breaks at various levels of government. Then they sell themselves to students as a public good. Is it right for such institutions to shield their financial data from prospective students, effectively adopting a let-the-buyer-beware attitude in the process?

O'Connor Ives offered her answer to the idea that the state has no business expanding oversight over private institutions.

"Well, then, pay taxes," she said. "If they want to go there, that's fine."

### Who Else Fits In?

Accreditors are watching the discussion in Massachusetts. NEASC has taken some flak for the Mount Ida situation because an evalua-

tion team that visited the campus in the fall recognized several financial issues. It wrote in a report that recent annual deficits were making it difficult for Mount Ida to support its mission. The college had negotiated waivers with bondholders to avoid defaulting on bond covenants, the report noted.

Currently, NEASC's Commission on Institutions of Higher Education is moving to make changes geared toward additional public disclosure. The commission can issue a formal notice of concern if it finds an institution is in danger of not meeting one or more of nine standards, including a standard covering institutional resources. Currently, the notice, which generally covers a two-year period, is sent privately to a college. The commission can then follow up with another notice of concern.

In September, the commission could adopt changes that would give it the option of issuing both public and private warnings.

The commission had been examining Mount Ida's finances for a long time, said Barbara Brittingham, president of the commission. That situation and the way it unfolded was unusual, she said. Until just before Mount Ida closed, it looked like it was going to agree to a merger with Lasell, which would have addressed its financial issues.

In some cases, the commission can ask struggling colleges for written teach-out agreements. Institutions are typically responsive to what the commission requests, Brittingham said. Some have recovered and grown strong after facing steep financial challenges.

Sudden collapses can pose a problem, though. They don't necessarily give accreditors time to act.

While the Mount Ida situation is worth examining, it's important not

to assume it is the new normal, Brittingham said.

"Lawyers like to say bad cases make bad law," she said. "People need to look at what happened and what's known about it but also keep in mind how unusual it was."

Some view additional regulatory involvement as likely to push more cooks farther into the kitchen, making it harder for any one entity -- institution, accreditor or regulator -- to act decisively.

Yet many wonder whether accreditors have demonstrated a track record of being able to address problems on their own.

"Accreditation is self-policing, right?" said Chris Gabrieli, board chairman at the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. "I think we need to listen to that, but I also think we have to recognize that, using Mount Ida as a test case, it's not clear that the process worked."

The department's working group is in the early stages of its efforts. Gabrieli expects it to have to negotiate deep tensions between interests in higher education.

Struggling institutions want a chance to turn things around -- to adopt new plans and new programs without being branded as failing and without being locked in a casket by regulators. But regulators can't help but wonder how they could have better served the public interest in a situation like the one at Mount Ida.

The working group may very well determine problems are widespread enough to merit becoming more involved. In the last five years, 15 institutions have closed or merged in Massachusetts.

If regulators decide more intervention is warranted, a key question is when they should intervene. It may or may not be reasonable to ask a college to look four years into

## Is There a Right to Know a College Might Close?

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the future and tell accepted freshmen that a campus is at risk of closure. But it is not reasonable to tell students a college is closing so late in the year that students will have trouble transferring to a new college, Gabrieli said. Nor is it reasonable to announce a closure so late in the year that hiring season for faculty members has already passed.

Right now, Gabrieli is thinking about the fall semester as an important time in a college's year.

"We're going to try and isolate that a bit more, but if by September, October, November -- somewhere in there -- if there is any risk the next school year won't happen, we think that's the line," Gabrieli said. "It crosses over from private interest -- reasonable, do your best -- to public interest. These families and students need to be made aware."

From there, an issue to address will be whether new disclosure requirements are enough.

"You have to ask yourself, is that really reasonable to say that parents and students are supposed to personally review the financials and make judgments?" Gabrieli said. "People expect there to be somebody who is both monitoring and expected to step in, in some constructive way, to prevent a tailspin."

Regulators and accreditors aren't the only ones under pressure. Boards should step up, too, Gabrieli said. Trustees can't pass off responsibility for a failed college by saying a president convinced them a turnaround plan was going to work.

"It's too easy to say management had a plan," Gabrieli said. "Why have a board if it's not your job to interrogate the credibility or check the

credibility of that plan, and at some point favor the interest of stakeholders other than management?"

At the moment, Massachusetts seems to have the most active discussion about regulatory changes for small colleges among the states. Representatives from both the Education Commission of the States and the National Conference of State Legislatures were not aware of similar debates elsewhere.

What works in Massachusetts might not translate to other states. But the attention on the issue there is reason to dig in and get things right, Gabrieli said.

"The fact that there are students this fall whose schools may be in peril for next spring gives us a sense of urgency," he said. "This is not something that can take two or three years." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/07/16/massachusetts-debates-new-regulatory-requirements-private-colleges-wake-mount-idas>

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# A Private University Matches Public Prices

Oglethorpe aims to win academically strong students by aligning tuition with their states' flagships.

By Rick Seltzer // August 23, 2018



SOURCE: OGLETHORPE UNIVERSITY

Oglethorpe University staked out new ground Wednesday in the struggle to stand out from the crowd of small private colleges, unveiling a pricing strategy that will match public college tuition rates in every state for members of next year's freshman class who meet certain benchmarks.

The 1,280-student university in Atlanta calls the strategy the Flagship 50 program. It's a non-need-based scholarship pegging the tuition some students will pay to sticker prices at flagship public universities in each of the 50 states and Washington, D.C.

Freshmen who qualify will pay the in-state tuition rates of flagship universities in their home state. To do so, a student will need to have posted a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.5, plus a minimum test score of 1250 combined SAT or 26 composite ACT.

In some ways, the new program resembles the University of Maine's

Flagship Match program, which [brought in new students](#) from out of state by dangling the prospect that they could pay the same tuition and fees to attend the University of Maine in Orono that they would pay if they were attending a flagship campus in their home state. But Oglethorpe looks very different from Orono because it is a private institution in the South, not a public one in the Northeast. It's also far smaller, with first-year classes measured in the hundreds, not the thousands.

That could mean Oglethorpe has a smaller margin for error -- or that it needs less of an enrollment bump to move the needle.

From the perspective of a student who is shopping sticker prices and has the necessary academic chops, Flagship 50 would appear to save thousands of dollars on Oglethorpe's published price. Oglethorpe [posts](#) a tuition rate of \$37,920 in 2018-19, plus \$530 in fees, before

room and board. Tuition and fees at the most expensive flagship on the [new program's list](#), the University of New Hampshire, total \$18,499. For the least expensive, the University of Wyoming, they are \$5,550.

That's not the total picture a student will face, because universities both public and private don't collect full sticker price from students. They discount tuition through scholarships and grants. Oglethorpe's discount rate has hovered at around 60 percent in recent years. The university reports net tuition per student of about \$13,700.

So the Flagship 50 program is a combination of a pricing and marketing effort aimed at one very specific slice of students: academically strong students who are often enrolling in state flagship universities instead of Oglethorpe, perhaps because the private university's sticker price scares them away.

"We're seeing a lower yield with our highest-qualified students,"

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said Larry Schall, Oglethorpe's president. "Particularly in the South, with all the various scholarship programs that the southern states have, they are being drawn to the state flagships if they can get in."

Another reason the program is particularly interesting is that it is nationally branded, while Oglethorpe largely draws regionally. The university's freshman class comes from 17 states, yet it has structured the program to match tuition at flagships nationwide (the overall student body comes from 33 states and 38 countries, according to Oglethorpe). Schall expects the program to help recruit students primarily from states from which Oglethorpe has traditionally drawn the most while also helping it push its reach to other nearby states in the South and Midwest. The university won't likely draw 30 students from North Dakota next year, and it isn't flying counselors around the country on an intense nationwide hunt. It should, however, start drawing students from more than 17 states.

Along with the new program, Oglethorpe is using a variety of arguments in favor of small, private liberal arts colleges to recruit students. After financial aid is factored in, many students can attend Oglethorpe for nearly the same cost of a state university, even without Flagship 50, its marketing materials say. They continue to say that Oglethorpe offers more small classes taught by professors than public universities' honors programs and that its student body is diverse. University leaders also express confidence in students graduating in four years.

Flagship 50 isn't only about recruiting students across state lines. Oglethorpe's main competi-

tors for students from Georgia are Georgia's public institutions, Schall said. That's worth noting because Oglethorpe draws 73 percent of its students from within the state, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

It's also worth noting because the sticker price for the University of Georgia that Oglethorpe would charge under Flagship 50 is \$11,830 -- below Oglethorpe's overall net tuition per student. Some of the state flagships targeted have higher sticker prices than Oglethorpe's net tuition per student, which could help offset those with lower prices.

But many flagships in neighboring states -- those most likely to send large numbers of students to Oglethorpe -- have sticker prices below Oglethorpe's net. Take, for instance, the University of Florida, with its sticker price of \$6,380. Flagship 50 could introduce unintended consequences.

Schall maintains even those consequences wouldn't have to be uniformly negative.

"If we had 100 new students from Florida come in, that would impact the net tuition price per student in a not-positive way," he said. Still, he continued, overall tuition revenue would increase in such a sce-

nario because Oglethorpe would be growing in enrollment and total tuition revenue collected. It would also increase the amount of money Oglethorpe collects from room and board charges, potentially adding to the bottom line.

In other words, Oglethorpe could often be collecting less in tuition revenue from the students it enrolls under Flagship 50 than it does from those who don't qualify for the program. But the program isn't intended to grow net tuition per student.

"We have some empty beds, we have room in classrooms, so we have capacity," Schall said. "We look at net tuition per student, but our strategic goal is to grow overall net tuition."

If Flagship 50 were in place this year, 40 students would have qualified. When the program is in place next year, Oglethorpe projects 70 students will qualify. Predictions show total fall enrollment growing from 1,280 this year to 1,310.

The university projects net tuition revenue per student will hold roughly even when the new program is in place. Total net tuition revenue is expected to rise from \$16.6 million this year to \$17.25 million.

Oglethorpe's pricing strategy is



We have some empty beds, we have room in classrooms, so we have capacity. We look at net tuition per student, but our strategic goal is to grow overall net tuition.





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likely to grab attention from affluent families who are comfortable paying the full sticker price at a public flagship university but might still be sensitive to higher published tuition costs at a private institution, said Bill Hall, founder and president of Applied Policy Research, an enrollment and pricing advising firm.

The approach is more about generating a marketing bump than it is about building revenue, Hall said. But if a university has excess capacity, additional students can help beyond generating incremental dollars. They can provide recruiters with a beachhead from which to break into new territory.

"If it gets you before populations you're not normally going to be in front of, you can see where the inquiries build and dedicate more resources," Hall said.

In that line of thinking, Flagship 50 functions like one of the tuition resets that [many colleges rolled out last year](#) -- a way to grab attention and enroll more of the most attractive students.

Schall draws a distinction between Oglethorpe and many of the institutions that put tuition resets in place. For the most part, tuition

resets were rolled out to "stop the bleeding" at struggling institutions, he said. Oglethorpe has not been struggling financially, he said, pointing to a history of surpluses. Yet it still needs to grow.

Oglethorpe's program could also be considered more targeted than a tuition reset. Where a reset cuts sticker prices for all students, Flagship 50 reduces them for a much smaller group. And while Oglethorpe committed to the scholarship for next year's freshman recipients for four years, it could change the program for entering classes after that.

Also, next year's scholarship recipients will have their awards frozen, but Oglethorpe's tuition will not be fixed. That means students will pay more if the university's tuition rises, which it typically does by 3.5 or 4 percent annually.

Colleges can be successful if they can point to a unique feature that's easily recognized, said another consultant, Larry Ladd. Oglethorpe rolled out a catchy name for the attention-grabbing strategy and appears to be complementing it with marketing efforts contrasting its small size against the "city-

like state" of public flagships, said Ladd, who is national director for Grant Thornton's higher education practice.

He still sounded a note of caution.

"So far, there is little evidence that creative pricing strategies are working to expand enrollment and especially net revenue," Ladd said in an email. "They are new enough that it is too early to tell. If others duplicate it, the competitive advantage will slowly decline in value and it will need to develop other similar strategies to differentiate itself in the marketplace."

Criticism sometimes lobbed at tuition resets also echoes here: if a small college is competing only based on price, it is in a dangerous position.

Oglethorpe leaders can retort that they have other advantages to attract students, like the aforementioned class sizes and location. Some other private institutions in Georgia are struggling, Schall said.

"Our students come because they want the opportunity that Atlanta brings," he said. "We would not be doing nearly as well as we're doing if we were not in Atlanta." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/08/23/oglethorpe-aligns-its-sticker-prices-state-flagships-academically-strong-students>



## Letting the Donor Decide

Record \$50 million gift to Saint Louis University gave donors the right to help pick head of research institute and give that person a faculty title. Professors see dangerous erosion of academic values.

By Marjorie Valbrun // October 8, 2018



Rex and Jeanne Sinquefield,  
donors to Saint Louis U

[Saint Louis University](#) administrators and faculty were thrilled when a wealthy local couple -- Jeanne and Rex Sinquefield -- donated \$50 million to the institution. The gift would allow university leaders to pursue bold and ambitious goals for the next decade and "accelerate SLU's rise as a world-class research university."

Faculty and administrators alike agreed the infusion of cash could draw attention to the region and recognition of it as an emerging research hub. They also believed it would lure more scholars and students to the university.

The mutual excitement by the administration and the professors fostered a spirit of optimism and collaboration on campus, and a sense of shared aspirations. But the honeymoon ended almost as soon as it had begun after faculty members learned that the generous gift came with questionable and, to many, troubling strings attached: specific stipulations about

faculty hiring and research funding that faculty leaders say violate university policies and academic integrity and freedom.

The donation, the largest in the Roman Catholic institution's 200-year history, was [announced](#) in August, but university leaders had been in discussions about it with the Sinquefields for a year. The money will fund a [new research institute](#) that university officials say "will serve as the focal point for SLU's strategic goal of growing the scale and eminence of its research and scholarship," and a new Sinquefield Center for Applied Economic Research on the Missouri campus. It also will provide annual funding for the university's chess team, which happens to be located in [America's chess capital](#).

The agreement stipulates that Rex Sinquefield, a Saint Louis alumnus and trustee, and Mark Higgins, dean of the business school, would select the director of the new economic research center. The direc-

tor, a professor at the University of Missouri, was named and given the title of Sinquefield Professor of Economics without any prior notice to faculty, and without the input of a faculty-led hiring committee, as required under policies outlined in the faculty manual. The agreement also allows for research grants from the institute to be determined by a four-member committee that includes the Sinquefields.

There is a long tradition in academe of donors stipulating what they want to support -- a given department, building or program, for instance -- but hiring and awarding grants are viewed as academic decisions that should be handled by faculty members and administrators.

"The bottom line issue being confronted across the country is what level of control or influence should a donor have over the operation or various operations based on them giving a gift," said Douglas Rush, president of the university's Faculty

## Letting the Donor Decide

Senate and an associate professor of higher education administration. "Where do you draw the line between donor participation, donor influence and donor control over university matters?"

"Donors should be able to participate in every aspect of university life, but the issue is one of control -- they should have no control over any aspect of academics. They can participate as long as the control rests with the faculty."

Fund-raising experts say donations with strings attached -- both visible and invisible -- will likely become more common as state and federal higher ed funding stagnates. Megamillionaires and billionaires are increasingly stepping up to replace those shrinking public funds and, in the process, they are rewriting the rules of higher ed philanthropy, or at least aggressively trying to do so.

If the situation at Saint Louis's seems familiar, it's because these controversial agreements, once unheard-of in higher ed, are becoming more common. Donations from the [Charles Koch Foundation](#) -- and the power that agreements have given the foundation -- have been the source of controversies at Florida State University, West Virginia University, Clemson University, Utah State University and Chapman University. A decades-old [agreement](#) between George Mason University and the foundation is the subject of ongoing litigation.

While Koch Foundation gifts to universities and colleges are relatively modest, gifts from wealthy individuals tend to be very generous. In fact, they're getting larger.

According to the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, a relatively small group of donors accounted for large portions of



The bottom line issue being confronted across the country is what level of control or influence should a donor have over the operation or various operations based on them giving a gift.



contributions to college fund-raising campaigns. For instance, the top 1 percent of donors to campaigns accounted for 79 percent of the total funds received through June 30, 2015, according to CASE. During that same time frame, the top 10 percent of donors accounted for 92 percent of the funds received.

No longer content to have buildings named for them -- never mind small-potato departments or endowed chairs -- some of these benefactors are demanding more say in the creation of new academic departments, programs or research centers. They want input on the hiring of the directors and faculty who will populate these departments and centers. They want to dictate the subjects that can be studied or taught, the political bent of the research pursued, and the selection of the scholars that will do the research. (Still, many other donors give generously without making any demands for involvement in academic decisions.)

As the amounts of money donated skyrocket, so too do the demands of the donor.

"It can become a slippery slope," says James Finkelstein, professor emeritus of public policy at George Mason and an expert on develop-

ment and advancement issues. "It becomes even more treacherous when donors personally are involved."

He says agreements such as the one approved by Saint Louis University "step on academic freedom and violate the role of the faculty in determining curriculum. They make faculty hires difficult."

Saint Louis administrators and faculty are still working through their differences over the terms of the donation from the Sinquefelds. (He co-founded the investment firm Dimensional Fund Advisors, which has more than \$525 billion in global assets.) After professors told university administrators that hiring the director of the research center violated faculty hiring policy, administrators acknowledged making a mistake and removed "professor" from the director's title and replaced it with "executive director." They also reclassified his position from "faculty to staff." But they preserved the filled position, as the donor agreement dictated.

Faculty members were not impressed or appeased.

"I asked the dean if there was a pool of candidates and he said no, the donor recommended someone who is qualified," Bonnie Wilson, an associate professor of economics,

## Letting the Donor Decide

said of the naming of the director.

Wilson and another economics professor, David Rapach, are leading the opposition to the agreement.

"I don't think the donors should be able to pick the person who will both conduct and direct the research at the center," Wilson said. "The position hasn't been posted as far as we know, so we don't know how it conforms to EEO laws and the university's own commitment to diversity and equality."

She said the hiring of the director should have been handled by a faculty search committee "with expertise in an area of work that this employee is going to be asked to conduct."

University administrators say critics of the donor agreement overlook the overriding benefits of \$50 million in new funding that will allow the university to significantly expand its research footprint and enhance its academic standing.

"This is our first gift of this magnitude," said Ken Olliff, vice president for research. "There's some growing pains among our faculty on how contemporary philanthropy works."

He said there were safeguards in place to protect the integrity of the research that the donation will fund, including a research council made up of the chairpersons of the science and engineering, applied health, scholarship research, and other large departments across the university.

The research council will evaluate applications and send them to the research growth committee, which will then send them to the nonprofit board the donors set up. The board includes four people -- the Sinquefields, Olliff and a retired professor of economics.

"They made no specifications

about what kind of research we could do," Olliff said. "They said we trust you, it's more about 'how do we help you move the institute forward?' Let us provide the resources.

"We have goals, visions and metrics, but they are our goals, our vision and our metrics. The donors said that we needed to lay out what our goal and metrics were, so we laid that out and will hold ourselves accountable. The donors want us to move forward with our vision. It becomes a partnership. In my mind this is exactly how philanthropy should work."

Michael Lewis, the acting associate provost for faculty affairs and development, and an associate professor of chemistry, said he, Olliff and Dean Higgins "are working hard to get everybody in the same place with regard to the gift."

He noted that 165 faculty members signed a statement expressing their gratitude to the Sinquefields.

"The response from the majority of the faculty has been largely very positive by a long shot," he said. "They're very excited about how it's going to transform the university and transform their research agendas."

In a statement for this article, Rex Sinquefield said, "Our only motivation in making this gift is to help

SLU pursue excellence and grow in prestige. That not only benefits SLU and its students, but also the whole St. Louis region, which is a wonderful place to do research that can transform people's lives."

Said Wilson, "I would agree with the statement that many, perhaps most faculty, are grateful for gifts from donors. But it's not at all clear to me that there is support for the donor being involved with hiring ... or support for donors to have a role in granting of funds for individual projects by faculty."

She noted that many faculty members also signed a [resolution](#) by the Faculty Senate expressing concern about the agreement flouting the principle of academic freedom. The resolution was distributed by word of mouth and was not shared with junior faculty and still got 70 signatories, she said. "Many people signed both statements," she said.

A motion was subsequently approved by the members, stating, "Donors should not participate in employment matters of the university, nor should they play a role in determining the curriculum or in the direction of funding to particular students, faculty, or individual research projects."

Lewis said the faculty concerns



I would agree with the statement that many, perhaps most faculty, are grateful for gifts from donors. But it's not at all clear to me that there is support for the donor being involved with hiring ... or support for donors to have a role in granting of funds for individual projects by faculty.



## Letting the Donor Decide

are being heard. He insists the donors will not be involved in employment, curriculum and research matters.

"I hear those concerns at Faculty Senate meetings," he said. "We've said that won't happen. I don't know how else to address that. Faculty control curriculum and the hiring process; it's in the faculty manual and will continue to be the case. I can't make it any more clear than that."

Rapach said simply reclassifying the director's title from "faculty" to "staff" without changing his duties reflects "many word games being played."

"The administration has emphasized that they viewed the director and the researchers as staff positions and not faculty. But the director still would direct and conduct scholarly research," he noted. "The fact that the person is a scholar engaged in work similar to faculty compromises and violates the spirit and intent of the faculty manual."

What's more, donors having say even over staff positions "is a clear violation of academic norms," he said. "We're talking about donor influence, inappropriate donor influence."

Rapach said the terms of the agreement lack transparency and risk the university's reputation as an independent research institution.

"They violated accepted norms of academic integrity and independence," he said. "I'm very concerned about my academic reputation, and I'm worried about the reputation

of the university more broadly. Entering into these types of arrangements and granting these special privileges to donors will have implications to the university's reputation and its scholars. It's almost as if we're inviting negative scrutiny."

University administrators tried to reassure faculty members at a Faculty Senate meeting last month by telling them that Rex Sinquefield will have [no say in hiring or firing faculty](#) and that he and his wife also would have no role in directing or drafting research proposals. The administrators did not, however, change the role they had agreed to, allowing him to help select grant recipients.

Not everyone was convinced these steps would create a permanent and impenetrable wall between the donors and the administration of the research institute or the economic center.

Finkelstein said demands by big donors are likely to increase as more college and universities acquiesce to them.

"What's happening in universities today is that presidents are looking for these eight- and even nine-figure donors," he said. "That's how they keep score and show their fund-raising abilities. Finding these donors and keeping these donors is also important to keeping your job as president. So, when you have someone able to write a \$50 million check, you want to make sure you can keep them happy."

And keeping donors happy is being prioritized over keeping faculty happy, he said.

"The distance between how to advance a president's career is very far and very different from how faculty advance their careers, which is with research and scholarship," he said. "Today what advances a president's career almost more than anything else is fund-raising. They're paying less and less attention to faculty in terms of these matters. They think if I can get a \$50 million gift but it gets me grief from faculty, that's OK, because the board isn't going to fire me."

Finkelstein noted that 70 percent of a typical college president's time is spent soliciting outside funding.

"They're increasingly divorced from the inner workings of the faculty," he said. "That responsibility is increasingly being turned over to the provosts and dean."

This is the case at Saint Louis, where the dean and acting provost are leading the meetings and discussions with faculty about the Sinquefield donation and trying to assure them that everything is aboveboard.

Rapach, who has taught at the university since 2003, is dismayed by the state of affairs.

"To the extent that academia moves in this direction, it compromises the ability of higher ed institutions to serve society," he said. "These norms and standards that we have are precisely what makes academic research valuable to society ... When these rules aren't adhered [to], it compromises our ability to best serve society and ends up undermining the very research that the donors are supporting." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/10/08/professors-question-big-donation-saint-louis-university-because-conditions-attached>



# Power Plays on UNC Board

Implosion of Western Carolina University chancellor search once again exposes deeper struggle at UNC System, with many fearing that political interests are overtaking academic issues.

By Rick Seltzer // August 3, 2018



SOURCE: UNC SYSTEM OFFICE

When the search for the next [Western Carolina University](#) chancellor broke down in spectacular fashion [last month](#), it once again revealed a University of North Carolina System unsettled by leaders jostling for power.

The search fell apart after an outspoken member of the system's Board of Governors, Tom Fetzer, independently hired a screening firm and proceeded to question the leading chancellor candidate's background. Fetzer [has said](#) he was trying to prevent the board from making a bad decision. But several of his fellow board members sharply criticized him for overstepping his bounds, not following established processes and breaching confidentiality in what the system pledged would be a closed search.

Fetzer's actions can be read as an implicit challenge to University of North Carolina System president Margaret Spellings's powers, because the Western Carolina search was supposed to follow a

[prescribed path](#) with Spellings as a gatekeeper. A 22-member search committee was to recommend finalists to the Western Carolina local Board of Trustees. Trustees were to advance a slate of candidates to Spellings, who would forward one finalist to the Board of Governors for approval.

It wasn't the first time in Spellings's 29-month tenure that the UNC System has been tested by power plays -- carried out by both the Board of Governors and the state Legislature that appoints the board's members.

Virtually from the moment she took over in the spring of 2016, she was put on the spot by a controversial [bathroom law](#) supported by state lawmakers that the Obama administration cited as evidence that the University of North Carolina's campuses were violating Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. Two years ago, lawmakers faced accusations of meddling in university business after they

[passed legislation](#) to create an environmental public policy laboratory at the flagship Chapel Hill campus, upsetting faculty members who felt established planning processes were being violated and who eyed the laboratory's politically connected research director uneasily.

Then last year, the Board of Governors [unexpectedly](#) created committees to examine reorganizing Spellings's staff and to consider moving the administration offices out of Chapel Hill. Also last year, the board [banned](#) UNC centers from performing litigation, a move that effectively targeted a center for civil rights. Attempts to address the Silent Sam Confederate soldier statue on Chapel Hill's campus led to board members [criticizing](#) Spellings, and the statue [continues to be a problem](#) for leaders.

Critics and faculty members worry the developments demonstrate a power grab by politically minded interests -- and a disregard for traditional university governance struc-

tures designed to protect academic freedom by insulating campuses from the whims of the powerful. It's not surprising North Carolina's GOP-dominated Legislature has appointed a board that is almost entirely Republican, they point out. Observers say that board is being filled with members who have increasingly close ties to the state's Republican Party.

If that outlook is true, Spellings is serving as a key line of defense between the university system and the impulses of the Republican Party of North Carolina -- an unexpected role for President George W. Bush's secretary of education.

When she took the UNC job, observers assumed she was attracted by the idea of focusing on completion, affordability and assessment issues. She has managed to [emphasize](#) those points. Yet they remain overshadowed by the bruising battles over social issues that have regularly catapulted the system into headlines.

So far, Spellings has proven to be a pragmatist and a skilled diplomat who can negotiate prickly political situations while keeping her eye on the big picture. But faculty observers wonder how long she will be able to keep the system from descending into dysfunction. Meanwhile, her name [has been](#) floated for the open University of Texas System chancellor position, although it's not clear whether she would consider the job in her home state.

Some resolution to the UNC system's governance issues may be inevitable after the circumstances surrounding the scuttled Western Carolina chancellor search became public last week, said David A. Green, the chair of the UNC Faculty Assembly and a professor of law at North Carolina Central University.



People, now, will have to have clear, direct conversations about what is the role of the Board of Governors, what is the role of the Board of Trustees. What is the president's role?



"My sense is that it addressed the elephant in the room," he said. "People, now, will have to have clear, direct conversations about what is the role of the Board of Governors, what is the role of the Board of Trustees. What is the president's role?"

In the UNC System, boards of trustees work at the campus level. Their appointment has also been the subject of [political maneuvering](#) in recent years.

### Chancellor Search Objections

UNC System board members were supposed to vote July 12 on a chancellor candidate to succeed the late David Belcher, who last year took a leave of absence and died in June of brain cancer. But they never voted, despite a long closed-door session.

Then it emerged that Fetzer had hired a firm where a friend worked to check out a top chancellor candidate. On July 11, Fetzer emailed some board members, questioning the candidate's lecturing history. He would later say there was a misrepresentation of fact on the candidate's résumé.

On July 16, Western Carolina [announced](#) the finalist for the position had withdrawn from consideration and the chancellor search would be put on hold. Interim chancellor Ali-

son Morrison-Shetlar is continuing in that role.

A tense situation erupted between board members last week, with some members accusing Fetzer of breaching confidentiality by disclosing secret information to a third party. He also drew criticism for allegedly violating board policy and process. He defended himself by saying a good hire was more important than process.

Fetzer did not respond to a request for comment filed through his company, Fetzer Strategic Partners. His actions have been panned by media outlets in North Carolina.

They are unethical by any practical standard, a Capitol Broadcasting Company [editorial argued](#). Fetzer isn't a passive interested party, it said. He is a former Western Carolina trustee who acknowledged he'd been recommended by two former board members to be the university's interim chancellor. The editorial went on to say the Board of Governors should examine whether it was appropriate for Fetzer to gain access to otherwise confidential information and whether it was ethical for him to give that information to a private screening firm he hired personally.

Elsewhere, a columnist for the *Smoky Mountain News* wrote that



## Power Plays on UNC Board

the “yoke of political influence” is growing heavier on the Board of Governors.

“Because much of the process used to replace a chancellor is shrouded in secrecy, those who care deeply about this university and its faculty and staff are left guessing as to what exactly happened,” [wrote](#) Scott McLeod. “But there are many of us who can’t help but suspect the worst kind of chicanery, especially given the brand of politics played by the current legislative leadership. It’s a sad state of affairs, particularly if our great university system becomes just a pawn in this ongoing power play.”

Faculty leaders were unhappy with the chancellor search even before it ended in flames. They suggested problems were inevitable in a closed chancellor search allowing for no public forums with finalists.

While it might make sense to have a closed process early on, at the point when finalists are determined, searches should be transparent, said Brian Railsback, chair emeritus of the Western Carolina University Faculty Senate. Transparency allows those on campus to offer input and vet candidates, he said.

The closed search was a highly undemocratic process, argued Railsback, who is an associate professor in the English department at Western Carolina. When the majority of people on a campus have no input or knowledge of chancellor candidates, a small number of people influence the outcome, making it easy for politics to intrude.

“Who does this process serve?” he asked. “It serves political interests. It allows a small number of people to manipulate a process.”

The Board of Governors is reviewing the hiring process for chancellors. That’s a silver lining, said

Railsback. But the current chair of the university’s Faculty Senate, Damon Sink, urged caution.

“If the BOG process revisions result in less participation by stakeholders such as the WCU Board of Trustees, the institution, and community, we will be hard pressed to express much confidence in that process or its outcome,” he said in a statement. Sink is an associate professor in the university’s school of music.

An improved search process could help chancellors be more effective in their jobs, said Green, the chair of the system Faculty Assembly.

“If the process is not clean, it puts the new chancellor at a disadvantage,” he said. “You can have the best chancellor in the world, but if the process is not clean, it’s going to hurt your process.”

The chair of the Board of Governors, Harry L. Smith Jr., supports local control of chancellor searches. The Board of Governors should not be involved, he said in a news conference last week. Spellings endorsed confidentiality that is respected through the whole process.

### Unsettled Roles

Perhaps the more immediate issue is whether system leaders can agree on their primary responsibilities. Smith has thrown his support

behind Spellings, saying last week that he learns more about the difficulty of her job every day. It is tricky to manage the board, which is made up of 28 people, he acknowledged.

“I’ve said early and often that it’s my hope to work with a united board and develop a governance platform and take the personas out of it,” Smith said. “That is still the goal and will remain the goal. One thing I’ve learned is there is a lot of passion on the issues.”

Calibrating the relationship between the president and board members happens over time, Spellings said at the same press conference last week.

“What are the expectations?” she said. “What are theirs, what are mine? That’s going to develop over time. I think we’ve all learned a few things the last couple weeks, and I look forward to continuing the conversation.”

Spellings and Smith were not available for interviews Thursday.

Spellings has in the past spoken at greater length about higher education’s lofty goals and its political realities. Higher ed is a “precious place where ideas are germinated for the good of society,” she said in [an interview](#) in September with WRAL, a television station in North Carolina. That doesn’t make sense to short-term thinkers or those



If the process is not clean, it puts the new chancellor at a disadvantage. You can have the best chancellor in the world, but if the process is not clean, it’s going to hurt your process



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worried only about the bottom line, she continued, before admitting she sounded a “little highfalutin.”

Soon enough, she addressed the reality that higher education is tied to politics.

“We’re in a political arena,” she said. “That’s what this is about. Everything in a public setting is going to have some politics. It’s going to have some regionalization. It’s going to have issues around the needs of particular localities or particular disciplines and on and on and on, and that’s actually part of the fun of it -- is how to do problem solving for big public policy issues in a setting that has all that drama, all those personalities, all those characteristics.”

At the same time, she asked for a board focus on the big picture.

“Let me manage the enterprise, and let them set policy,” she said. “Let them see and understand and defer to the chancellors and me, who have a lot of experience in the enterprise, while we leverage the talent and expertise of businesspeople, political people, the broad range of experience we have on this

board.”

That doesn’t seem to have happened last month. Nor does it seem to align particularly well with an outlook Fetzer quoted last year, when he had been on the board for just two months.

He made news by quoting former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, who called consensus the abandoning of all beliefs in search of something “in which no one believes but to which no one objects,” he said on Sept. 7, [according to \*The News & Observer\*](#).

“Divisions in this board, if respectful, will be very helpful,” he said. “Raging internal conflict is a long-held American tradition, and I think even the casual student of history would have to agree that nothing great in this country occurred without a raging, raucous, robust, passionate debate beforehand.”

The Western Carolina search binds together issues that have been hanging over the system’s governance for quite some time, said Stephen Leonard, a past chair of the UNC Faculty Assembly and an associate professor emeritus at

Chapel Hill. Faculty fear politicians are trying to use the university system for political purposes, trying to choke off its public resources and using it for patronage positions.

The system is in a crisis of governance “that has the potential for turning the university more sharply down the course of authoritarian capture and partisan manipulation,” Leonard wrote in a July 27 letter to the Board of Governors chair, Smith. “If the board’s increasingly emboldened proclivity for hubris and conceit is not moderated, you will be unable to retain the talented executive leadership you now have, and you will find it very difficult to attract talented leadership in the future.”

Asked in an interview about Spellings’s role protecting the university system, Leonard gave a response that seemed to echo an old adage: politics makes strange bedfellows.

“I’m no friend of Margaret Spellings -- I certainly disagree with a lot of what she’s said,” Leonard said. “But she does believe in public higher education. What she’s finding now is she’s got people who won’t even let her do her job.” ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/08/03/unc-system-power-dynamics-display-summer>

## Presidential Spouses Behaving Badly

Wisconsin Whitewater is latest university to find a presidential spouse can become a campus liability. Even on campuses without controversies, partners face heightened scrutiny.

By Marjorie Valburn // October 24, 2018



Beverly Kopper and Pete Hill  
at her 2015 inauguration

When the husband of the chancellor of the [University of Wisconsin at Whitewater](#) was banned from campus events last month because of sexual harassment allegations against him, the unenviable task of informing the campus fell to his wife.

"As you can imagine, this is a challenging and unique set of circumstances for me as a wife, as a woman, and as your chancellor," Beverly Kopper wrote in a message to the campus after the allegations were deemed credible.

That Kopper's husband, Pete Hill, had put her in such an uncomfortable position made the admission all the more embarrassing and, unfortunately for the university, more newsworthy. The investigation and subsequent dismissal of Hill from an advisory position on campus made [local](#) and [national headlines](#).

While having to publicly address such a sensitive and highly personal incident is relatively rare for a leader of a college or university,

Kopper is not alone in being thrust into the media spotlight because of the behavior of a spouse. Other university presidents and chancellors have also been the subject of past [news reports](#) because of the [serious actions, or eyebrow-raising antics](#), of their husbands or wives.

[Spousal misbehavior](#) reflects badly not only on the president but on the institution itself and can have far-reaching implications in terms of potential donors and students. At a time of declining enrollment and increasing reliance on wealthy benefactors, trustees and governing boards are more image conscious than ever.

Troublesome spouses of executives obviously exist in many professions. But employees or stockholders of a Fortune 500 company would likely not have any idea who is the spouse of the CEO. In higher education, the social missteps, indiscretions and lapses in judgment of spouses of college presidents are getting more attention than in

past decades, said Susan Resneck Pierce, a former college president and now a consultant to colleges and universities. (She occasionally [writes columns for Inside Higher Ed](#).)

"Twenty years ago, it would have been a problem for the institution and only known about in the local community or the narrow region," said Resneck Pierce, president emerita of the University of Puget Sound, where she served from 1992 to 2003. "What was previously just considered a local problem has become more national because social media has really put a spotlight on the problems. The more intense the spotlight and public attention, the more the board will worry and try to address it, depending on the circumstances."

With [confidence in higher ed](#) falling and growing numbers of politicians and pundits questioning the need for a college education, the last thing university administrators want is for someone closely

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associated with their institution to be in the wrong, or for negative news about a president's spouse or domestic partner to go viral and become the butt of Twitter jokes and ridicule or the subject of less-than-flattering memes.

Nevertheless, the reach and influence of social media has, at times, raised public interest in college presidents and their spouses to a level usually reserved for scandal-prone celebrities. As a result, college governing boards and presidential couples are figuring out how to negotiate this new terrain.

"I think the important point here is that when one of the spouses or partners becomes the president, it's simply a given that both individuals are going to be in a public role. It just comes with the territory," said Elaine Maimon, the longtime president of [Governors State University](#), a public institution in University Park, Illinois. "You just have to be prepared for that and to just keep in mind that you're always, to some degree or other, going to be representing the university. It just means the president lives and breathes that every day and can never forget it."

Modern presidential spouses or partners are also individuals, however, and don't necessarily want to be seen as mere appendages of the president to whom they happen to be married. The spouses and partners often have their own careers and interests that don't revolve around the job of the president. Being mindful of how their actions or statements may be viewed on and off campus is one thing; being focused on this full-time is another.

"Sometimes they can forget that simply by virtue of the partnership, there's going to be a level of public scrutiny that just comes with it,"



Maimon said.

Prior to becoming president of Governors State in 2007, Maimon was chancellor of the University of Alaska at Anchorage and a vice president at Arizona State University, where she led a campus. Her husband, Mort Maimon (who has also [written for Inside Higher Ed](#)), moved with her from job to job over the last two decades.

Before he settled into his current role, he worked as the head of the English department at a Philadelphia high school. He then taught education as an adjunct lecturer at the University of Pennsylvania, and English at Arcadia University.

"It's not a kind of carefree enjoyment," he said of being a presidential spouse. "It's a conscious enjoyment. You don't take things for granted; you have to be observant and understand the culture you're living in and the impression you give others."

He said every campus has its own unique culture, and spouses or partners that take the time to understand it tend to fare better.

"I'm not a naturally sociable guy," he said. "I've gained sociability in the 22 years I've been doing this. I tend to be reticent, which might be deemed as antisocial or as not

being forthcoming. This may not be true, but the truth can become the impression some people might have of you."

"I've learned a lot. I think there's a distinct difference between the kind of person I am at this point than when I first started. I hadn't thought about what kind of community I was entering, what my role will be."

According to [a 2016 survey](#) of presidential partners, transitioning into the role is a "major life event" that can be "especially problematic."

The survey, "The Lives of Presidential Partners in Higher Education Institutions," was conducted by University of Minnesota researchers under the direction of Karen Kaler, wife of university president Eric Kaler. Some 461 spouses and partners of college and university presidents and chancellors participated.

Although 84 percent of those surveyed said being the spouse or partner of a college president was "satisfying, very satisfying or extremely satisfying," many also said they struggled with defining their roles "and the stresses of a very public existence."

"According to survey respondents, the role is seldom made



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clear before presidents accept their positions, few institutions have written partner policies, and presidential contracts rarely mention the partner role," the study authors wrote in the summary of their findings.

David A. Williams, author of *Caesar's Wife, The College President's Spouse: Minister without Portfolio or the President's Conscience?*, [wrote about these challenges](#) in a 2013 article for *Trusteeship Magazine*, a bimonthly publication of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges.

He described attending conferences sponsored by various presidential associations, specifically the sessions for spouses, where "the common complaints of presidential spouses were aired -- frankly, and, at times, emotionally."

"This is where the truth is told -- where presidential spouses let their hair down and tell each other how they feel about their lives. A majority are not happy. Many feel they are not respected. Some feel they are hated," he wrote.

Williams, who is married to Peggy R. Williams, president emerita of [Ithaca College](#) in New York and former president of Lyndon State College in Vermont, implied that husbands and wives of college presidents are held to a high standard with little margin for error.

"So long as the presidential spouse can keep the rank and file (and the broader community) happy, all is well," he wrote. But if the spouse makes a questionable decision not supported by trustees, "There will be hell to pay."

Mort Maimon plans to attend the annual meeting of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities this month in Washington. He is scheduled to lead a ses-



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sion for the organization's spouse and partner group on balancing how they're perceived on campus with the image they want to create.

"This doesn't mean being phony," he said. "It's about how to go beyond who you think you are, and how your manner and demeanor defines who you are to other people. It doesn't come automatically, it requires thought; you have to be flexible and adaptable."

The role of the presidential spouse has evolved as the ranks of presidents have diversified and more women, and to a lesser extent, partners in same-sex couples have become college presidents.

"My sense is that the role of the partner or spouse of a college president has been challenging for most of the past 50 years, especially as there has been greater diversity in terms of the gender of the president," said Jay Lemons, president of Academic Search, an executive search firm.

Lemons, who was president of Susquehanna University for 16 years and also served as chancellor of the University of Virginia's College at Wise, said there have increasingly been two-career couples attached to the presidency and that this development "has complicated the waters."

"I don't know that anything has changed other than there are more media outlets and more opportunity for events or instances to be more widely known," he said.

"In the vast majority of cases, the partners have been remarkable and made great contributions to the health and wealth of countless colleges and universities," he said. "There are to my mind, a remarkably small number of cases where these incidents have revealed themselves in public ways."

When that happens, things can get ugly. The board of the University of Tennessee once [banned the wife of the system's then president](#) from having any contact with university donors or staff members after she allegedly berated a donor and reduced her to tears. The ban was lifted only after the president, John Petersen, wrote the board and pledged that his wife, Carol Petersen, would conduct herself appropriately.

E. Gordon Gee left Vanderbilt University in 2007 after six years as chancellor, during which his then wife, Constance Bumgarner Gee, had a rocky tenure as "first lady."

Outspoken and politically liberal, she pushed back against the university's social conventions and the expectations of trustees.

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She lowered the American flag at the presidential mansion to half-staff after President George W. Bush was re-elected in 2004. She signed a letter of protest against the university giving Condoleezza Rice, the former secretary of state under Bush, a medal for distinguished public service. She smoked marijuana in the presidential mansion, which she said was to ward off violent episodes of nausea caused by Meniere's disease, but trustees were unimpressed and particularly displeased that *The Wall Street Journal* chronicled her actions in [a front-page article](#).

Now divorced from Gordon Gee, Bumgarner Gee said she made some mistakes and has some regrets. But she noted that she came into the role at a disadvantage after moving with her husband from Brown University, and before that, Ohio State University, and having to adjust and adapt to a new campus culture each time. She said there were no guidelines or discussions about what would be expected of her in the role.

Bumgarner Gee, [who wrote a memoir about being married to a three-time college president](#), has plenty of advice for would-be presidential spouses.

"I would encourage them to sit down with the board and to have early conversations about what is really expected of them and what they're willing to do and what they're not willing to do. And to be very up front about what kinds of events they'll attend and how much time they want to put into it. If you are politically engaged, perhaps you should talk about that, ask if that's a problem. Be very open. And also have a heart-to-heart with your husband. I would also counsel other first ladies to keep their own

counsel, and as much as you'd like to be seen as very approachable and open, don't be. You can be friendly, but don't give anything up. The people around you, the staff and faculty, are not your chums. People will want to be close to you only because of who you are and to whom you are married. They're not your friends. I wish I had understood that better."

Lemons, a married father of four during his years as a president, noted that when a university hires a president, the president's spouse or partner -- and extended family members -- are effectively hired, too, even if they're not on the payroll.

"There is the occupant of that office, be it a person who is male or female, and if they are partnered, that partner becomes a significant strand of that presidency," he said. "The children are part of that, and even aging parents are part of the picture."

Lemons believes families -- spouses and partners in particular -- provide added and invaluable service to the presidency.

"I think about the 25 years I spent in the presidency and the incredible asset my partner was in those 25 years. She made me a better president and provided unsung and extraordinarily generous service. We

held about 100 annual events. She was one my most important counselors. So my experience was enhanced, made extraordinarily better by the role my wife played."

He noted that official residences of presidents are essentially "part home, part museum, part event center. The very existence of them gives kind of royal-like quality to the American university president," and magnifies controversies or scandals that take place in or involve official residences.

"The voyeurism is that much more connected to them when things don't run normally or smoothly," he said.

"There have been in my career, a handful of cases where, very sadly, lives are examined very publicly. My sense is that when these things have exploded and captured public interest, it is just a process of living through them ... Those are just never good events and they damage institutions and people, more reputational for the institution and more damaging to the individual."

Lemons said he couldn't think of any controversial incident involving a spouse or partner that was more than just a temporary dent to a university's reputation, "but certainly for the individuals who find themselves in these circumstances they're probably longer lasting."



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To be sure, the problems don't always originate with the spouses or partners. Sometimes they get into trouble when their personalities clash with the egos of trustees or other administrators on campus. Wives of male presidents complain of being held to standards that husbands of female presidents are not. Even when they have outside careers, they say, some university administrators, faculty members and benefactors have outdated notions of the role of presidents' wives and think they should serve as social secretaries and dinner party hosts for their husbands.

Spouses can alienate or offend top administrators and trustees by not attending events for rich donors or taking active part in the ingratiating schmoozing expected of presidents and their partners. Or by seeming [too assertive](#).

Same-sex partners of presidents have sometimes had to contend with subtle and even blatant homophobia on campus, especially campuses located far from urban centers. Sometimes the spouse or partner of the president is simply not a good match with a particular campus.

Elaine and Mort Maimon have had no such run-ins or culture clashes -- and they hope things stay that way.

Looking back at the years gone by, Mort Maimon says he would have relished teaching a literature course as a member of the faculty, but he worried an official position would be seen as his wife favoring him over other job candidates.

"I would be an easy target for charges of nepotism," he said. "I never wanted that."

Instead, he settled for volunteer

positions on each campus where his wife worked. He tutored undergraduates and worked with them on reading assignments and discussions, he helped prep graduate students to apply for competitive scholarships and fellowships. At Governors State, he's helping students improve their writing.

"I love to work with students, to see what you start out with and what you end up with," he said.

At this point, he's just as much a pro at being the official spouse as his wife is at being president. Just don't call him the first gentleman.

"I'm not the first gentleman or any other official designation, absolutely not," he said. "I'm just the husband trying to make things as easy for my wife as possible and not be an impediment, obstacle or any kind of thing she has to overcome." ■

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2018/10/24/controversial-spouses-college-presidents-can-hurt-image-president-and-university>

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